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Inside C2

Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

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Iranian state-organised marchers call for execution of protesters

DUBAI, Sept 23 (Reuters) - State-organised rallies took place in several Iranian cities on Friday to counter nationwide anti-government unrest triggered by the death of a woman in police custody, with marchers calling for the execution of "rioters".

The pro-government marches followed the strongest warning yet from authorities when the army said it would confront "the enemies" behind the unrest - a move that could signal the kind of crackdown that has crushed protests in the past.

The crowds condemned the anti-government protesters as "Israel's soldiers", live state television coverage showed.

"Offenders of the Koran must be executed," they chanted.

The Twitter account 1500tasvir, which has 117,000 followers, reported heavy clashes in the central city of Isfahan between anti-government protesters and security forces.

It also showed anti-government street protests in several parts of the capital and in Shahin Shahr in central Iran.

State TV said 35 people had been killed in the unrest so far based on its own count and an official figure would be announced.

Many Iranians are fuming over the case of Mahsa Amini, 22, who died last week after being arrested by the morality police for wearing "unsuitable attire".

The morality police, attached to Iran's law enforcement, are tasked with ensuring the respect of Islamic morals as described by the country's clerical authorities.

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Amini's death has reignited anger over issues including restrictions on personal freedoms in Iran, strict dress codes for women and an economy reeling from sanctions.

The anti-government protests are not expected to pose an immediate threat to Iran's clerical rulers, who have security forces which have put down one protest after another in recent years, analysts say.

But the protests have clearly made the authorities nervous. Women, who have played a prominent role, have challenged the country's Islamic dress code, waving and burning their veils.

Some have publicly cut their hair as furious crowds called for the fall of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

'OUR RED LINE'
Iran's police chief Hossein Ashtari weighed in with tough words in an attempt to stop the protests.

"The people's security is our red line," he told state TV. "Those involved in sabotage and creating insecurity based on directives from outside the country should know that they



will be strongly dealt with."

The army's message on Friday, seen as a warning to protesters, read: "These desperate actions are part of the evil strategy of the enemy to weaken the Islamic regime."

The military said it would "confront the enemies' various plots in order to ensure security and peace for the people who are being unjustly assaulted".

Intelligence Minister Mahmoud Alavi on Friday also warned "secessionists" that their "dream of defeating religious values and the great achievements of the revolution will never be realized", according to the AsIran website.

Friday's pro-government demonstrations showed the strength of the Islamic Republic, President Ebrahim Raisi said, adding that turmoil would not be tolerated.

"The people's presence (in the marches) today, is the power and the honour of the Islamic Republic," Raisi, facing the biggest protests since 2019, said on live television after returning from New York where he attended the United Nations General Assembly.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres met with Raisi in New York on Thursday and raised human rights issues, a U.N. spokesperson said.

The United Nations is concerned "about reports of peaceful protests being met with excessive use of

force leading to dozens of deaths and injuries", spokesperson Stephane Dujarric told reporters.

HACK ATTACKS, ARRESTS
Human rights group Hengaw said a general strike was held on Friday in Oshnavieh, Javanroud, Sardasht and other towns in the northwest where many of Iran's up to 10 million Kurds live.

Internet blockage watchdog NetBlocks said mobile internet had been disrupted in Iran for a third time.

Twitter accounts linked to Anonymous "hacktivists" voiced support for the protests and said they had attacked 100 Iranian websites, including several belonging to the government.

Websites of the central bank, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and several state-affiliated news agencies have been disrupted in recent days.

Iran's clerical rulers fear a revival of the protests that erupted in 2019 over gasoline price rises, the bloodiest in the Islamic Republic's history. Reuters reported 1,500 people were killed.

Rights groups such as Hengaw and HRANA, lawyers and social media users reported widespread arrests of students and activists at their homes by security forces in an apparent effort to curb protests.

Majid Tavakoli, a student leader turned human rights activist, was detained overnight, his brother Mohsen said.



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LOCAL NEWS

Blinken tells China's Wang peace in Taiwan Strait is vital

NEW YORK, Sept 23 (Reuters) - U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken told his Chinese counterpart on Friday that the maintenance of peace and stability over Taiwan was vitally important, as the two met with tensions high over the Chinese-claimed island.

Taiwan was the focus of the 90-minute, "direct and honest" talks between Blinken and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, a senior administration official told reporters.

"For our part, the secretary made crystal clear that, in accordance with our long-standing one-China policy, which again has not changed, the maintenance of peace and stability across the Strait is absolutely, vitally important," the official said.

Tensions over Taiwan have soared after a visit there in August by U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi - which was followed by large-scale Chinese military drills - as well as a pledge by U.S. President Joe Biden to defend the self-governed island.

Biden's statement was his most explicit to date about committing U.S. troops to the defend the island. It was also the latest instance of his appearing to go beyond a long-standing U.S. policy of "strategic ambiguity," which does not make it clear whether Washington would respond militarily to an attack on Taiwan. [read more](#)

The White House has insisted its Taiwan policy has not changed, but China said Biden's remarks sent the wrong signal to those seeking an independent Taiwan. [read more](#)

In a phone call with Biden in July, Chinese leader Xi Jinping warned about Taiwan, saying "those who play with fire will perish by it."

The State Department had said earlier that Blinken's meeting with Wang was part of Washington's ongoing efforts to "maintain open lines of communication and manage competition responsibly," and the senior official said Blinken had reiterated U.S. openness to "cooperating with China on matters of global concern."

Blinken also "highlighted the implications" if China were to provide material support to Russia's invasion of Ukraine or engage in wholesale



sanctions evasion, the official added.

U.S. officials have in the past said they had seen no evidence of China providing such support.

Blinken "underscored that the United States and China and the international community have an obligation to work to counter the effects of that invasion and also to deter Russia from taking further provocative actions," the official said.

China sees democratically governed Taiwan as one of its provinces. Beijing has long vowed to bring Taiwan under its control and has not ruled out the use of force to do so.

Taiwan's government strongly objects to China's sovereignty claims and says only the island's 23 million people can decide its future.

'DEVASTATE OUR BILATERAL TIES'
Blinken's meeting with Wang was preceded by one between the foreign ministers of the Quad grouping of Australia, India, Japan and the United States, which issued a statement, referring to the Indo-Pacific, saying that "we strongly oppose any unilateral actions that seek to change the status quo or increase tensions in the region."

The official who briefed on Friday said that since Pelosi's

visit "China has taken a number of provocative steps that have by design acted to change the status quo."

U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris will discuss Taiwan security during bilateral meetings with the leaders of key U.S. allies Japan and South Korea when she visits their two countries next week, another senior administration official said on Friday. [read more](#)

Daniel Russel, the top U.S. diplomat for Asia under former President Barack Obama, said the fact Blinken and Wang had met was important after the turbulence prompted by Pelosi's visit, and hopefully some progress would have been made towards arranging a meeting between Xi and Biden on the sidelines of the G-20 in Bali in November, which would be their first in-person as leaders.

"Wang and Blinken's decision to meet in New York does not guarantee the November summit will go smoothly or that it will even occur. But had they been unable to meet, it would have meant the prospects for a summit in November were poor," said Russel, who is now with the Asia Society.

In a speech to the Asia Society in New York on Thursday, Wang said the Taiwan question was growing into the biggest risk in China-U.S. relations.

Editor's Choice



Demonstrators cut their hair during a protest in solidarity with the women in Iran, following the death of Mahsa Amini, in Berlin, Germany, September 19. via REUTERS



An image of Zhina Mahsa Amini at a candlelit vigil following her death, outside the Wilshire Federal Building in Los Angeles, California, September 22. REUTERS/Bing Guan



A demonstrator holds cut hair during a protest following the death of Mahsa Amini, outside the Iranian consulate in Istanbul, Turkey, September 21. REUTERS/Murad Sezer



Aghdas Dyonisio, an Iranian Kurd, demonstrates with an image of Mahsa (Zhina) Amini at a protest and vigil following her death, outside the Wilshire Federal Building in Los Angeles, California, September 22. REUTERS/Bing Guan



A woman cuts her hair in protest following the death of Iranian woman Mahsa Amini in police custody, near Bologna, Italy, in a social media video. Faezeh Afshan/via REUTERS



A demonstrator holds a placard, during a protest following the death of Mahsa Amini, outside the Iranian Embassy, in Athens, Greece, September 22. REUTERS/Costas Baltas

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

BUSINESS

Highlights From The United Nations' Latest Release Of Its World Population Estimates

Key Findings From The 2022 United Nations Population Prospects Study

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor



Key Points How many people are there in the world? How many die each year, and how many babies are born? These are key questions that we need to understand the world around us.

The UN releases an update of its World Population Prospects every two years. Its latest release was due in 2021 but was delayed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Overview United Nations July 11, 2022 Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division

World Population Prospects 2022 The 2022 Revision of World Population Prospects is the twenty-seventh edition of official United Nations population estimates and projections that have been prepared by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat.

#1. The World Population Will Pass 8 Billion At The End Of 2022

Since 1975 the world has been adding another billion people every 12 years. It passed its last milestone - 7 billion in 2011. And, by the end of 2022, it will pass another one: there will be 8 billion people in the world.

While this rate of absolute growth is similar to previous decades, the growth rate continues to fall. Since 2019, the global population growth rate has fallen below 1%.



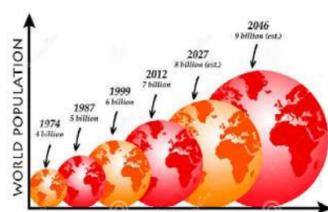
That's less than half its peak rate of growth - of 2.3% - in the 1960s. As global fertility rates continue to fall (see below), this rate will continue to fall.

#2. The UN Estimates Around 15 Million Excess Deaths In 2020 And 2021 From The COVID-19 Pandemic

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has had a significant impact on global population and migration trends. We know that the confirmed death toll from COVID-19 is likely to significantly underestimate the true number of deaths because of limited testing.

#3. The Global Population Is Projected To Peak At Around 10.4 Billion In 2086

The world population has increased rapidly over the last century. When will it come to an end? Previous versions of the UN World Population Prospects showed a significant slowdown in population growth, with very slow growth - almost reaching a plateau - by the end of the century.



#3. The Global Population Is Projected To Peak At Around 10.4 Billion In 2086

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#4. The Global Fertility Rate Has Continued To Decline To 2.3 Births Per Woman

A key determinant of the global population rate is the average number of children that women have over their lifetime - the 'fertility rate'. Fertility rates have fallen rapidly across the world in recent decades.



If you switch to the map tab in the interactive chart you see that most people in the world now live in countries where fertility rates are at - or below - the 'replacement level'. This is the level at which populations would stabilize or shrink over the long-term.

#5. Next Year India Is Expected To Take Over From China As The World's Most Populous Country

China has been the world's most populous country for decades. It is now home to more than 1.4 billion people. However, its population growth rate has fallen

significantly following a rapid drop in its fertility rate over the 1970s and 80s. The fertility rate in India has also fallen substantially in recent decades - from 5.7 births per woman in 1950 to just 2 births per woman today.

World Population Highlights The Current World Population 7,961,890,500 TOP 20 LARGEST COUNTRIES BY POPULATION

Table listing the top 20 largest countries by population, including China, India, USA, Indonesia, Pakistan, Brazil, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Russia, Mexico, Japan, Philippines, Egypt, Vietnam, D.R. Congo, Turkey, Iran, Germany, and Thailand.

World Population: Past, Present, and Future

At the dawn of agriculture, about 8000 B.C., the population of the world was approximately 5 million. Over the 8,000-year period up to 1 A.D. it grew to 200 million (some estimate 300 million or even 600, suggesting how imprecise population estimates of early historical periods can be).



During the 20th century alone, the population in the world has grown from 1.65 billion to 6 billion. In 1970, there were roughly half as many people in the world as there are now.

Population Growth Rate Population in the world is, as of 2020, growing at a rate of around 1.05% per year (down from 1.08% in 2019, 1.10% in 2018, and 1.12% in 2017).

Annual growth rate reached its peak in the late 1960s, when it was at around 2%. The rate of increase has nearly halved since then, and will continue to decline in the coming years. World population will therefore continue to grow in the 21st century, but at a much slower rate compared to the recent past.



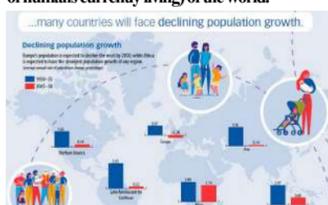
The latest world population projections indicate that world population will reach 10 billion persons in the year 2057.

World Population Forecast (2020-2050) 10 Billion (2057) The United Nations projects world population to reach 10 billion in the year 2057.

9 Billion (2037) World population is expected to reach 9 billion in the year 2037.

8 Billion (2023) World population is expected to reach 8 billion people in 2023 according to the United Nations (in 2026 according to the U.S. Census Bureau).

7.96 Billion (2022) The current world population is 7.96 billion as of July 2022 [1] according to the most recent United Nations estimates elaborated by Worldometer.



7 Billion (2011) According to the United Nations, world population reached 7 billion on October 31, 2011.

The US Census Bureau made a lower estimate, for which the 7 billion mark was only reached on March 12, 2012.

6 Billion (1999) According to the United Nations, the 6 billion figure was reached on October 12, 1999 (celebrated as the Day of 6 Billion). According to the U.S. Census Bureau instead, the six billion milestone was reached on July 22, 1999, at about 3:49 AM GMT.

Protected, for Now Walensky's sober warning came at the same time the CDC released new guidance calling for the wearing of masks indoors in schools and in any location in the country where

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

COMMUNITY

'A Few Mutations Away': The Threat of a Vaccine-Proof Variant



Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

July 30, 2021 -- The CDC Director Rochelle Walensky, MD, made a dire prediction during a media briefing this week that, if we weren't already living within the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic, would sound more like a pitch for a movie about a dystopian future.

SHOULD I BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE DELTA VARIANT? New data show Delta is different than past versions of the virus: it is much more contagious. Vaccinated people can get breakthrough infections of Delta variant and may be contagious. Vaccinated individuals represent a very small amount of total transmission.

'We've gone through a few mutations already that have been named, and each one of them gets a little more transmissible,' he says. 'That's normal, natural selection and what you would expect to happen as viruses mutate from one strain to another.'

'What we've mostly seen this virus do is evolve to become more infectious,' says Stuart Ray, MD. 'That is the remarkable feature of Delta - that it is so infectious.'

He says that the SARS-CoV-2 has evolved largely as expected, at least so far. 'The potential for this virus to mutate has been something that has been a concern from early on.'

'The viral evolution is a bit like a ticking clock. The more we allow infections to occur, the more likely changes will occur. When we have lots of people infected, we give more chances to the virus to diversify and then adapt to selective pressures,' says Ray, vice-chair of medicine for data integrity and analytics and professor in the Division of Infectious Diseases at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in Baltimore, Maryland.



'The problem is if the virus changes

in such a way that the spike protein - which the antibodies from the vaccine are directed against - are no longer effective at binding and destroying the virus, and the virus escapes immune surveillance,' Nelson says.

If this occurs, he says, 'we will have an ineffective vaccine, essentially. And we'll be back to where we were last March with a brand-new disease.'

Technology to the Rescue? The flexibility of mRNA vaccines is one potential solution. These vaccines could be more easily and quickly adapted to respond to a new, more vaccine-elusive variant.

'That's absolutely reassuring,' Nelson says. For example, if a mutation changes the spike protein and vaccines no longer recognize it, a manufacturer could identify the new protein and incorporate that in a new mRNA vaccine.

'The problem is that some people are not taking the current vaccine,' he adds. 'I'm not sure what is going to make them take the next vaccine.'

Recombination has already been seen with influenza strains, where H and N genetic segments are swapped to yield H1N1, H1N2, and H3N2 versions of the flu, for example.

Both Nelson and Ray point out that it is in the best interest of the virus to evolve to be more transmissible and spread to more people. In contrast, a virus that causes people to get so sick that they isolate or die, thus halting transmission, works against viruses surviving evolutionarily.

Mutations Not the Only Concern Viruses have another mechanism that produces new strains, and it works even more quickly than mutations. Recombination, as it's known, can occur when a person is infected with two different strains of the same virus. If the two versions enter the same cell, the viruses can swap genetic material and produce a third, altogether different strain.



Nothing Appears Certain When asked how likely a new strain of SARS-CoV-2 could emerge that gets around vaccine protection, Nelson says, 'I think [what] we've learned so far there is no way to predict anything' about this pandemic.

'The best way to prevent the virus from mutating is to prevent hosts, pro-



COVID-19 cases surpass 50 people per 100,000, also known as substantial or high transmission areas. On a positive note, Walensky says: 'Right now, fortunately, we are not there. The vaccines operate really well in protecting us from severe disease and death.'